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Police terror kills 7-year-old girl

Jobs gone, Detroiters face growing repression

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire
Detroit

At 12:35 a.m. on May 16, more than 20 Detroit police officers staged a raid at a two-family dwelling on the east side where they said a warrant was to be served for a suspect in a recent murder case. The police threw a flash bomb through the front window of the frame house. It caused a fire in the bed where 7-year-old Aiyana Stanley Jones was sleeping alongside her grandmother, Mertilla Jones.

Then the cops kicked in the door of the downstairs flat. A few seconds later Aiyana Jones was shot by a police officer in the neck and head. Her grandmother Mertilla Jones told Workers World she “saw the light go out in her eyes.” Young Aiyana was dead.

The next few hours were harrowing for the families living in the home. Charles Jones, Aiyana’s father, said there was no warning and that the incendiary device thrown into the home was the first sign of a police presence.

Jones said later that sections of the couch where Mertilla and Aiyana Jones were sleeping were “cut up and taken to the police station as evidence.” For more than three hours the police ransacked the house and held several of its residents in detention outside the home.

Charles Jones said that he was held face down for hours by the police. Aiyana’s aunt, Lakrystal Sanders, recalled how she was kept outside in the cold with no shoes for two hours by the police. “Why didn’t the police come when it was daylight, why did they come at night?” she asked.

Sanders also noted that “there was an unmarked vehicle parked in front of the house” for hours the day before the actual raid. She stated the police told her they were looking for her fiancé as a suspect in the killing of a 17-year-old.

“They never knocked and I was coming to open the door when I heard an explosion and the police kicked in the door,” Sanders said.

Mertilla Jones was taken into police custody for several hours after the raid and then released without being charged. Corporate-owned media reported that she was being held because the grandmother had purportedly reached for the officer’s gun, prompting the shooting. Jones denies these allegations.

“I never did anything, they are lying. They killed my grandbaby,” Jones said. “I laid down and put the blanket over Aiyana and the window exploded.”

The raid was filmed by the “The First 48” television show for an episode airing at a later date. In light of the killing of Aiyana, the videotape could prove to be quite revealing in reconstructing the events of the early morning police action.

Repression escalates in city

There is a growing pattern in Detroit of brutality and repression carried out by law-enforcement and other state agencies.

In response to the killing of Aiyana Jones, the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality dedicated its entire radio program on May 16 to exposing the incident. “Fighting for Justice” airs every Sunday morning at 10 a.m. on AM station 1310 WDTW. The DCAPB organized a press conference and candlelight vigil for later that day outside the Jones’ home.

The week prior to the Jones’ killing, five Detroit police officers were shot, one fatally, inside a vacant home on the east side. A 25-year-old African-American

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ABOVE, WW PHOTO: BILL BATEMAN; RIGHT, FIST VIDEO: CALEB MAUPIN

Students fight high school closings

High schoolers are walking out to keep their schools open.

Above, students in Providence, R.I.

Right, Cleveland police arrest two teenage sisters.



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Lesson #1 of BP oil spill

Capitalism can't protect the environment

By Gene Clancy

As millions of gallons of crude oil continue to spew into the Gulf of Mexico, the owner of the collapsed oil rig that caused the disaster is trying desperately to elude responsibility for what has already cost the lives of 11 workers and threatens to become the worst oil catastrophe in U.S. history.

In addition to the growing oil slick on the surface, scientists are finding enormous oil plumes in the deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico, including one as large as 10 miles long, 3 miles wide and 300 feet high in spots. This discovery is fresh evidence that the leak from the broken undersea well could be substantially worse than estimates given by the government and BP, formerly British Petroleum.

“There’s a shocking amount of oil in the deep water, relative to what you see in the surface water,” said Samantha Joye, a researcher at the University of Georgia who is involved in one of the first scientific missions to gather details about what is happening in the gulf. The plumes are depleting the oxygen dissolved in the Gulf, worrying scientists, who fear that the oxygen level could eventually fall so low as to kill off much of the nearby sea life.

Scientists studying video images of the gushing oil well have tentatively calculated a flow rate of 25,000 to 80,000 barrels of oil a day. But the government, working from satellite images of the ocean surface, has calculated a flow rate of only 5,000 barrels a day.

When asked about this discrepancy, BP officials replied that no one could accurately estimate oil flows from a video. However, BP has resisted entreaties from scientists that they be allowed to use sophisticated instruments at the ocean floor that would give a far more accurate picture of how much oil is really gushing from the well.

“The answer is no to that,” BP spokesperson Tom Mueller said on May 15. “We’re not going to take any extra efforts now to calculate flow there at this point. It’s not relevant to the response effort, and it might even detract from the response effort.” (!)

Calling knowledge of the oil flow “not relevant” is only the latest in a series of measures taken by the oil giant to escape responsibility. Last week BP asked the courts to limit its liability for the deaths of the 11 oil workers, and many more who were injured, to \$27 million. BP rang up \$6 billion in profit in just the first three months of 2010 -- almost 223 times what it wants to pay out in damages.

A BP executive repeatedly told a congressional hearing that BP would “pay all legitimate claims.” However, when pressed to define what “legitimate” meant, he replied: “uh ... substantiated ... I can’t really define the term.”

At the same hearing, CEOs from the three companies most directly involved in the disaster — BP, TransOceanic Leasing and Halliburton — tried desperately to shift the blame to each other.

Capitalism contradicts science

Behind the evasive maneuvers of BP and all big business lurk huge flaws in the capitalist system itself. Establishment economists like to sing the praises of capitalist markets, how they allegedly provide consumers with their needs and wants efficiently based on supply and demand. According to this model, businesses risk their

capital, then organize and distribute production.

For these services the capitalists are supposed to deserve the profits generated in production. This is the mainspring for the entire system. Supposedly, consumers make choices and vote with their dollars: no dollars, no votes.

According to these high priests of capitalism, anything worthwhile must have a market price. Everything outside their system is essentially useless, since no profit can be made from it. Grass, trees, wildlife, the oceans, mountains, soil, even air and water are a distraction at best, a hindrance at worst — unless someone can find a way to profit from them.

But they go even further: To a capitalist, the vast masses of people, the workers and oppressed, are a commodity to be exploited, just like the oil buried deep beneath the waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

Anything that goes wrong in this system, according to these economists, is the result of an “externality,” something outside the markets. Floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions are all “externalities.” But so, too, is the destruction from wars, industrial pollution, even economic depressions.

The capitalist system and those who operate it pretend to be hermetically sealed against not only the rest of the natural world, but from their own mistakes. The capitalist system exists to enable the ruling classes to make money. If it does not make money for them, or if the masses of people rebel, or if the planet itself becomes inhabitable, the fault lies not with the system but with “externalities.”

Since World War II, some capitalist economists, pressured by environmental and social justice movements, have tried to inject ideas of social responsibility into capitalism. According to Karl William Kapp, a German-American economist, capitalists should break out of their self-serving isolation and take on responsibility for the social costs of their activities, especially when it comes to environmental degradation.

According to Kapp’s model, corporations should “give back” and be “good citizens.” They should be required to pay the true costs of their enterprises, including the prevention and cleanup of environmental and social disasters that they cause.

Many modern corporations, including BP, have given lip service to this idea. Despite an atrocious safety and environmental record, BP boasted about how “green” it was. Behind the slick ads, however, lay a grim truth. Markets don’t just run on greed; they also operate on fear.

A life-and-death struggle

BP is the world’s largest oil company. Despite its former name, more than 50 percent of its stock is owned by U.S. banks. If one looks at the creditors who hold its debt and finance its operations, U.S. institutions have an even bigger role. BP, as it exists today, is the product of a merger between the British Petroleum Company and AMOCO, the old Standard Oil of Indiana and part of the Rockefeller oil empire. It also includes the old Atlantic Richfield (ARCO).

BP did not get where it is by being “socially responsible.” When it was the Anglo-Iranian Oil Co. during the 1950s, it and the CIA helped foment the coup that

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Banker austerity plans forced on Spain and Portugal

Capitalist crisis drags down more workers

By Fred Goldstein

The big picture is that the global profit system of capitalism is in a crisis that is enveloping more and more workers on all continents. The fate of workers everywhere is deeply interconnected.

The crisis of the euro and the \$1 trillion bailout of Greece, Portugal and Spain are a prelude to major attack on the workers of southern Europe. This attack, if successful, will not only hurt the workers of Europe but will deepen the crisis for workers in the U.S. as well.

This calls for class solidarity between European and U.S. workers to fight off this coming attack. It also speaks to following the example of the Greek workers, who have already carried out militant general strikes against draconian austerity measures.

Another general strike set for May 20 intends to shut down all public services and disrupt public transport. Schools will close, state hospitals will function on emergency staff and all ferries will remain tied up at port. Journalists will also walk off the job, pulling news broadcasts off the air. But air traffic controllers are not expected to join the strike, leaving the country's airports open.

Two major demonstrations are planned in Athens against the austerity measures.

The crisis was set off by the prospect that the Greek government would not be able to pay bondholders \$11 billion (8.5 billion euros) due on May 19. A default to the bondholders might have set off a string of defaults similar to that of Lehman Bros. in the U.S., threatening the financial system and the economy.

The big bankers of Europe and the U.S., as well as the International Monetary Fund, feared an economic meltdown in Europe that would spread to the U.S. They united to demand that the Greek government attack the Greek workers as the price for a big bailout loan.

Bankers extort Greek workers

To gain loans from other European countries and the IMF, the Greek government "embraced budget austerity. Average pension benefits will be cut 11 percent; wages for government workers will be cut 14 percent; the basic rate for the value-added tax will rise from 21 percent to 23 percent. These measures will plunge Greece into a deep recession. In 2009, unemployment was about 9 percent; some economists expect it to peak near 19 percent." (Washington Post, May 10)

The Portuguese and the Spanish governments were also talked to by the European powers and by U.S. officials, including Vice President Joe Biden and Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner. They got the message and have introduced similar austerity attacks on the workers.

Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero will try to shrink expenditures by another \$18.3 billion and will cut 1.5 percentage points off the deficit this year and next by immediately cutting public servants' salaries by 5 percent and freezing salaries next year. Portuguese Prime Minister José Sócrates imposed a "crisis tax," most of which will fall on workers through sales taxes and income tax increases.

The austerity measures that the bankers of the U.S. and Europe want to impose on the workers of Greece, Portugal and Spain, as well as Ireland — which has already been subjected to bankers' austerity demands — will deepen the crisis of unemployment in Europe. European mar-

kets will contract. But Europe is the biggest export market for U.S. goods. If U.S. exports shrink, unemployment will rise even further in the U.S. along with rising unemployment in Europe.

This thread connecting the fate of the workers could easily be followed to China, Latin America and the entire globe.

Budget crisis from Greece to California

The current capitalist crisis is taking the form in Europe of a budgetary crisis. A similar crisis is advancing steadily in the U.S., but it has not grabbed headlines yet. For example, the bankers and bondholders are also doing to California what they are doing to Greece.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of California has acted the role of Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou. His recently unveiled \$83.4 billion plan would freeze funding for local schools, further cut state workers' pay and take away 60 percent of state money for local mental health programs.

Schwarzenegger would eliminate CalWorks, the state's main welfare program. This would affect 1.3 million people, of whom 1 million are children. The program, which requires recipients to eventually have jobs, provides families an average of \$500 a month. Ending those payments would save the state \$1.6 billion, the administration said. It would also make California the only state not to offer a welfare-to-work program for low-income families with children.

Families would also lose state-subsidized day care under the governor's proposal. About 142,000 low-income children would be affected. Local school funding would be frozen and one-third of the budget for in-home health care would be eliminated, among other vital services.

On a federal level, President Barack Obama has appointed a special budget commission to come up with findings and recommendations by the end of the year to cut Social Security, Medicare and other social services in order to keep secure the interest payments to big banks due on government loans and to make sure there is plenty of money for Pentagon wars.

The capitalist media and the economic talking heads never stop promoting the line that workers in Europe are living high on the hog and that workers in the U.S. should stop thinking about social services as an "entitlement."

That's not the Marxist view. From the point of view of the working class, the federal, state and city budgets show clearly that the only ones living high on the hog and getting "entitlements" are the bankers, the military-industrial complex and all the corporate interests that feed at the trough of the public treasury.

Treasury belongs to the workers

Money in the government treasury comes from taxes. Those taxes come from either the workers or the corporations. The money that comes directly from the workers consists of deductions from their wages. The taxes that come from business are a deduction from profits. But the profits come from workers, who created the wealth in the first place.

Every dollar or euro or yen that goes out of the public treasury goes in one of two directions. One direction is social wages, that is, using the worker-created wealth for social services or infrastructure that society needs. The other direction is to the bankers and bosses and the military, police and other repressive forces of the state used against the workers.

When the government guarantees and protects the interest paid to the banks and the profits paid to the Pentagon/military-industrial complex, all of which comes from the wealth created by the workers, it is the rich that are getting an "entitlement." They have done nothing for it, have contributed nothing to society. The bankers' only claim to the funds is that they are the owners of money.

The workers, on the other hand, have the righteous claim that it is all their money, all the collective creation of their labor. Payments to bankers amount to a transfer of wealth upwards. So the struggle over the budget is a political struggle to determine how much of the budget will be spent on social wages and how much will go to parasitic financiers in the form of profit.

Every budget cut in social services is, in effect, a cut in social wages.

So the capitalists, on top of cutting wages and benefits on the job for those who are still working during this economic crisis, are cutting wages further in the form of budget cuts.

That is what the Greek workers are fighting against. That is what teachers in California fought against when they went on strike.

That is what the heroic students of California did when they sat in and demonstrated against the cuts in public funds for the state university. That is what 19,000 high school students did recently in New Jersey when they walked out around the state protesting school budget cuts. That is what the students at the University of Puerto Rico are doing in fighting cutbacks there.

They all were and are defending the class interests of the workers and the oppressed in the long run.

Workers shouldn't pay for capitalist deficits

The capitalist pundits all claim that they have to cut the budget to reduce deficits because the deficits will interfere with an economic recovery. They refuse to acknowledge that they have it backwards.

The deficits are not the problem, but a symptom of the deeper problem of capitalism. The fact is that capitalism can no longer grow in a significant way that would put tens and hundreds of millions of workers worldwide back to work.

A capitalist economy must expand; otherwise it goes into crisis. And capitalist expansion is the only way for workers to get jobs under this system. But the system is approaching a dead end. The future of capitalism is slow growth and stagnation at best, with full-scale collapse on the agenda.

It is worth recalling that after World War II the government in the U.S. had a huge deficit. It is usually calculated to have risen to 120 percent of the gross domestic product. That is the highest in history and far higher as a percentage than it is now.

But U.S. capitalism overcame the deficit

in short order because it grew economically by rebuilding Europe and parts of Asia, which had been destroyed in the war. Out of the ashes of war it emerged as the world's most powerful imperialist country and extended its exploitation to every corner of the globe. And it stimulated its economic growth by constant militarization during the Cold War against the Soviet Union, China and the socialist camp, as well as two long wars against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Vietnam.

It went through a period of half a century of economic expansion on a vast scale, bringing in wealth looted from the peoples of the world as well as amassing vast profits from exploiting the workers at home.

This economic expansion is how U.S. and world capitalism overcame vast deficits. Massive surplus value was created in the process of production and in the process of plundering the underdeveloped post-colonial world.

Since the present crisis began, the capitalist state has put \$10.5 trillion into holding up the system. Europe has now followed suit with a \$1 trillion bailout. In the recent period Japan has committed to pump \$20 billion a day into the economy. There will be further bailouts and stimulus packages to come.

The deficits incurred by the U.S. capitalist government during and after World War II were incurred in the process of creating a whole new era of expansion for capitalism, which had come out of the Great Depression through war.

The present deficits being amassed by the governments of the capitalist world, however, are not capable of generating an expansion. They are desperate measures to stave off a great contraction — a collapse.

The bosses are trying to get the workers to pay for these attempts to save the system. Meanwhile, they cannot stop growing mass unemployment, poverty, cutbacks and the grinding down of the workers. Here in the U.S. that means especially Black, Latino/a, Asian, Native and immigrant workers.

So the workers, instead of helping the bosses save their system by paying for their deficits, should turn the tables and push the payment of any deficits back where they belong — on the shoulders of the rich, who have been living on the public dole for generations.

Instead of saving the rotten system that got us into this crisis, the best course would be to get rid of the capitalist profit system altogether. It is time for the wealth created by the workers to be socially owned and used by all of society, in a planned way, and not for profit.

The writer is author of the book "Low-Wage Capitalism," a Marxist analysis of globalization and its effects on the U.S. working class. He has also written numerous articles and spoken on the present economic crisis. For more information visit www.lowwagecapitalism.com.

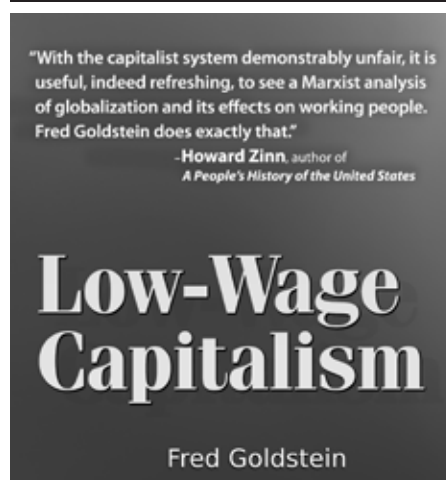
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Resistance is strong as Arizona outlaws Ethnic Studies programs

By Paul Teitelbaum
Tucson

On May 11, Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer signed into law House Bill 2281, which eliminates ethnic studies programs from the state's K-12 schools. This came just three weeks after she signed the repugnant anti-immigrant Senate Bill 1070.

The HB 2281 bill, which was pushed through the state legislature by the same racist forces that pushed SB 1070, not only eliminates the Tucson Unified School District's popular Mexican American Studies and Raza Studies programs but also slanders TUSD's programs with outright lies. It states that the ethnic studies programs teach students to "resent or hate other races" and that they "promote the overthrow of the United States government."

Mixelle Rascon is a graduate of Tucson High School's Ethnic Studies program and a current Raza Studies/Pre-Law stu-

dent at the University of Arizona. She told this writer about her experience in the ethnic studies programs and how they benefit oppressed youth: "In Latino Literature class, for example, I was introduced to writers like Sherman Alexie, Sandra Cisneros, Luis Urrea and many more, whose narratives touch upon the bicultural identities that are neglected in mainstream books and classes. The readings and assignments are thought provoking and become a breath of fresh air.

"Without these classes, a first look into diversity," Rascon continued, "when does one become inquisitive about other cultures? If all you have been exposed to is Eurocentric history, when does one become inquisitive about the contributions other cultures have made to this country?"

Rascon concluded that students will organize against these attacks. She vowed that they will "take to the streets and fight xenophobic policies because as

students and alumni, we realize we have been deprived, and that sterile and one-dimensional history does not serve students or highlight the contributions of various cultures."

She added, "We are not anti-government or anti-white but rather [we are] anti-ignorance and anti-xenophobia. ... We are resilient and will continue to fight and make our mark through various avenues, whether these may be artistic, political or disobedient. We know that the greatest threat to justice is to threaten education."

Students fight back

The latest attack against Arizona's Latino/a community was immediately met with outrage. Word quickly spread over the social media networks Twitter and Facebook that State Superintendent of Education Tom Horne was planning to visit TUSD headquarters on May 12

for "talks" regarding ethnic studies. The notorious Horne has been waging a battle against these programs for many years. (See Workers World, July 10, 2008.)

On that day 700 chanting students confronted Horne when he arrived at the TUSD building. They formed a human chain around the building and denied him entrance. TUSD canceled the meeting and Horne retreated to the State Building in downtown Tucson.

Protesters, including ethnic studies instructors, then followed Horne downtown and entered the State Building after him. Horne refused to speak with them. When the building closed at 5 p.m., the students and instructors refused to leave. A confrontation with the state police ensued, with the police arresting 15 protesters, including two instructors.

Students continued their militant stance against the rightwing attack on May 14, when they once again gathered in front of the TUSD building to demonstrate. They burned copies of SB 1070 and HB 2281 and called for the repeal of these racist laws. They called for more protests and organizing against them.

In fact, as of this writing, on May 17, students are gathering at Arizona Sen. John McCain's office to protest his anti-immigrant actions. McCain has called for dispatching 3,000 National Guard troops to the Arizona-Mexico border, citing "security concerns."

The struggle continues. A national march against SB 1070 has been called for May 29 in Phoenix. It is expected that this march will be large and attract many groups and individuals who are outraged by the racist offensive unleashed in Arizona. On May 30, there will be a one-day strategy meeting in Tucson to build a united fightback movement to take this struggle forward. For information on that meeting, email Tucson@workers.org or call 520-762-6629. □

'Don't play ball with Arizona'

Dozens of opponents of Arizona's apartheid law criminalizing immigrants gathered in front of Turner Field in Atlanta on May 15 to hold a "Don't Play Ball with the State of Hate" pep rally, complete with a band, cheerleaders, street theater, large banners and signs. A central demand of the protest is to remove the 2011 All-Star baseball game from Phoenix. Organizations involved in creating the loud and colorful demonstration included the Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights, the International Action Center, the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, the U.S. Human Rights Network and other student and community groups. Across the country, the Arizona Diamondback games have been a venue for expressions of outrage over the passage of SB 1070, which legalizes racial profiling and subjects communities of color to police harassment.



— Dianne Mathiowetz

PHOTO: SOFIA LIPKO

Georgia student fights deportation

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta

On March 29, Jessica Colotl was a high-achieving senior majoring in political science and French at Kennesaw State University and looking forward to graduating in a few months. Her life abruptly changed when a campus cop pulled her over for "impeding the flow of traffic" as she was entering a university parking lot.

Colotl, who was brought to this country by her parents when she was 11 years old, cannot secure a driver's license in Georgia because she has no papers. The Kennesaw campus is in Cobb County, one of the first local jurisdictions in the U.S. to enter into an agreement with Section 287(g) of Immigration and Customs Enforcement law, which grants counties the authority to enforce the federal law.

Colotl was arrested for driving without a license, taken to the Cobb County jail and then turned over to ICE agents, who transferred her to the Etowah Detention Center in Gadsden, Ala.

Hours from her family and friends, the young woman, like thousands of other detainees, was thrust into a frightening and uncertain situation, with deportation to Mexico the likely outcome.

However, Colotl's sorority sisters, through Facebook and other networks, began spreading the word about her case.



Sorority sisters of Jessica Colotl join May Day march in Atlanta.

PHOTO: ATLANTA IAC

Organizations like the Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights and the American Civil Liberties Union offered help. Even the president of KSU, Dan Papp, sent a letter in support of Colotl returning to her studies.

Still, on April 30, an immigration judge ordered her to be deported.

On May 1 thousands of people rallying at the Georgia State Capitol demanded her release. Her story was featured in newspapers and on television.

On May 5 her supporters celebrated the

news that ICE had granted Colotl a one-year deferment of her deportation in order to complete her education.

Stung by this reversal, right-wing politicians and anti-immigrant groups began to clamor for the removal of all undocumented students from public higher education in Georgia. Cobb Sheriff Neil Warren, a staunch proponent of 287(g), escalated the rhetoric by issuing a warrant on May 12 on a felony charge, alleging she had made a false statement to the

police about her place of residence.

According to Colotl's lawyer, the explanation is simple and one the sheriff's office should have been able to figure out. The Duluth, Ga., address on her car registration and insurance cards was used on the traffic ticket, but when asked by the ICE agents for her address, she gave them her current residence in Norcross, Ga. Nevertheless, Sheriff Warren made a great show of issuing a "fugitive" hunt for the young woman, proclaiming his duty to uphold the law.

An examination of Cobb County arrest records shows that the vast majority of the thousands arrested and turned over to ICE for deportation were stopped for minor traffic violations, just like Colotl.

Although the stated intent of 287(g) was to deport those involved in serious crimes like murder and rape, immigration rights activists charge local police with racial profiling and ethnic cleansing and demand the Obama administration end the program altogether.

Accompanied by her lawyers, Colotl turned herself in on May 14, was released on a \$2,500 bond and held a nationally covered news conference that afternoon. Responding to the barrage of questions from reporters, she repeated her "hope that something positive comes out of this, because we really need reform for this messed-up system." For more information on Jessica Colotl's case, call 770-457-5232.

On 25th anniversary of MOVE bombing 'No justice – no peace'

By **Betsey Piette and Audrey Hoak**
Philadelphia

When a supposed attempt to set off a car bomb in New York City fizzled in early May, with no one injured, a massive government investigation was launched to bring the alleged “terrorists” to justice.

Yet 25 years ago, when the authorities dropped a bomb on the roof of the MOVE house in West Philadelphia, causing a fire that killed 11 men, women and children and destroyed 61 homes, this act of terror against an African-American community resulted only in a government cover-up. Not one of the city, state or federal government officials responsible was ever brought to justice.

The MOVE Commission, which investigated the events of May 13, 1985, described the actions of government officials, including Philadelphia’s mayor and police and fire commissioners, as “reckless,” “ill-conceived” and “unconscionable.” A powerful, military-style bomb containing C4 was dropped from a police helicopter on the row house on Osage Avenue where MOVE members lived. Officials allowed the resulting fire to burn down an entire city block and then had police shoot at MOVE members, including children, who were attempting to flee the fire. Yet not one of these officials has ever faced criminal charges.

On May 12, a day before the 25th anniversary of this blatant act of murder by government officials, members of the MOVE organization filed a civil lawsuit against those in charge and responsible for the 11 murders. The court filing was followed by a press conference at the Friends Center.

Eight MOVE children stood at the front of the room, each holding a sign naming a

family member who had been killed. One read, “My sister Delisha was murdered by cops on May 13, 1985.”

Ramona Africa, the sole adult survivor of the 1985 fire, addressed the media on their obligation to tell the truth. Africa stated she is filing the criminal complaints not to seek justice - she isn’t that naïve — but rather to continue to expose the system.

Following the press conference everyone participated in a Honk against Police Terror outside City Hall and later marched to the African-American Museum for an evening screening of two films on MOVE. Speakers at the indoor event included Fred Hampton Jr. and journalist Linn Washington.

In an interview with Juan Gonzalez of Democracy Now! on May 13, Ramona Africa explained why MOVE believes that the system intended to kill its members and exterminate the organization.

“I want people to understand that bombing did not happen because of some complaints from neighbors,” Africa told Democracy Now!. “This government had never cared about Black folks complaining about their neighbors ... They bombed us because of our unrelenting fight for our family members, known as the MOVE 9, who have been in prison unjustly going on 32 years now as a result of the August 8, 1978, police attack on MOVE.”

Africa described how, in 1985, the MOVE house was first deluged by fire hoses and then “tons of tear gas, and then being shot at ... the police admit to shooting over 10,000 rounds of bullets at us in the first 90 minutes. ... It was quiet for a little bit and then, without any warning at all, two members of the Philadelphia Police Department’s bomb squad got in a Pennsylvania State Police helicopter, flew over

MOVE children demand justice in police killing of their relatives.

WW PHOTO:
JOE PIETTE



our home and dropped a satchel containing C4, a powerful military explosive that no municipal police department has. They had to get it from the federal government.”

Then-Mayor W. Wilson Goode claimed he had not been informed about police plans to drop the bomb. However, Goode had picked Leo A. Brooks, a retired Army general, to supervise the efforts to force MOVE members from their Osage Avenue row house.

Africa related what it was like to be in the house following the bombing. “We heard the loud explosion. The house kind of shook ... not long after that it got very, very hot in the house, and the smoke was getting thicker ... we could hear the trees outside of our house crackling and realized that our home was on fire. We immediately tried to get our children, our animals and ourselves out of that blazing inferno.

“The adults were hollering out that we’re coming out, we’re bringing the children out,” Africa reported. “And we know that the police heard us. But the very instant we were visible to them ... they immediately opened fire. We were met with a barrage of police gunfire ... and it forced us back into that blazing inferno.”

Ramona Africa escaped the fire with major burns by crawling out a basement window with a 13-year-old boy, Birdie Africa. She went on to serve a seven-year prison term on riot charges — the only person to face any jail time in connection

with the attack.

Africa told Gonzalez that firefighters stood there and allowed the fire to burn. Fire Commissioner William Richmond “tried to explain away their actions by saying he wasn’t going to have his firefighters in danger or come under fire from MOVE,” Africa said. But earlier, when there was no fire, “they had four deluge hoses, each of which pumped out 10,000 pounds of water pressure ... aimed at our home for hours in the morning of May 13. Why wasn’t it a danger then?”

The MOVE Commission in a report issued in 1986 concluded that police gunfire stopped adults and children from escaping. They cited statements from Ramona and Birdie Africa as well as police and firefighters who said they heard automatic or semiautomatic gunfire that evening. Investigations at the scene after the fire found no evidence that MOVE had those types of weapons. However, two months after the MOVE Commission issued its findings, a state grand jury reached the opposite conclusion and no charges were ever filed against the police.

The MOVE organization and their supporters continue to fight the unjust incarceration of the MOVE 9, one of whom died in prison. It’s an uphill battle.

Africa told the gathering at the African-American Museum, “There is no justice in the legal system. Not just for MOVE, but for anybody.” □

Despite racist encounters

Campaign to free Mumia won’t stop

By **Dolores Cox**

The recently passed racist, anti-immigrant SB 1070 Arizona state law is the message supported by descendants of European immigrants who initially stole the lands they now occupy, while slaughtering millions of the original Indigenous inhabitants. At the same time, the state of Virginia honored the pro-slavery Confederacy with fond memories of yesteryear and the “good ole days.”

All of this harkens back from the frightening past to the present so-called “post-racial” U.S. Whether it is Virginia or Arizona, racist reminders are to be found everywhere, including in the once pro-Confederate state of Maryland, as members of the Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition (NYC) were reminded of on their trip to Washington, D.C., on April 26.

The coalition organized a delegation to go from the press conference, march and rally to the U.S. Department of Justice to demand that U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder begin a federal civil rights investigation into the racist violations of Mumia’s legal and human rights. Also the delegation was to deliver an additional 20,000 letters and postcards in support of the investigation, plus call for a meeting with the Civil Rights Division.

On the way to D.C. the coalition experienced the misfortune of their bus breaking down. The driver pulled into a truck weigh station parking lot on a Maryland

highway to check the brakes. He then determined it wasn’t safe to continue the trip. He requested another bus from the company.

The coalition was detained for nearly three hours, during which time some folks disembarked and walked around outside seeking vending machines and restrooms.

One Black passenger returned from the weigh station to the bus and commented that the staff inside had attitudes sounding like the southern “rednecks” he encountered growing up in the South. A few others shared their familiarity with his experiences. Later a staff person walked from the building to the bus and was overheard telling the bus driver — in his strong southern drawl — that the passengers could no longer use the bathrooms, as they had “clogged both the women’s and men’s toilets.”

The bus driver then announced that the facilities were “off limits” to everyone. A state patrol car shortly appeared, parked in front of the weigh station building and remained there until the replacement bus came and finally departed. It should be noted that most of the passengers were African Americans.

Before the replacement bus arrived, one of the white coalition members, who had been asleep during the announcement, left the bus and entered the weigh station building. When she returned to the bus and was asked if they had given her a hard time, she was surprised at the

question. She stated that she went inside, asked where the restroom was, they pointed to it, and she was allowed to use it without incident. Both toilets were fully functioning.

Remembering the mission they were on, which was to get to D.C., along with the presence of the patrol car, no challenge to the obviously racist denial of the use of the restrooms seemed wise. White supremacy again reared its ugly head. Back to the past and present.

Pressure on Holder continues

No trip to Washington, D.C., was necessary on May 14. This time, Eric Holder came to New York City to deliver the keynote address to the 2010 Law School graduates of Columbia University. The Coalition to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal and other supporters were there hours beforehand with banners, signs and leaflets. They also distributed close to 1,500 palm cards to everyone in the vicinity of the university, including the graduates, their guests and university staff. One palm card was delivered to Holder’s secret service agent, asking that he give the palm card to the attorney general.

The palm cards were in color with Mumia’s photo on one side and the words “Civil Rights Investigation NOW!,” the coalition website and phone number. The other side of the card had a copy of the authorized photo of Eric Holder and the words, “Attorney General Eric Holder:

conduct a civil rights investigation for the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal.”

Below Holder’s photo was a statement to the law school graduates addressing the issue of wrongful convictions and violations of constitutional rights in the U.S. legal system, followed by information regarding the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal. At the bottom of the card are the words, “Join Us in This Fight for Justice!”

The importance of continuing the struggle to save Mumia Abu-Jamal’s life and eventually win his freedom cannot be overemphasized. He has been and continues to be an extraordinary fighter for freedom and justice — a voice of the voiceless. We are all Mumia!

Join the weekly call-in campaign: (202) 353-1555 to the U.S. Justice Department every Thursday, demanding a federal civil rights investigation. And organize, organize, organize! Free Mumia and all political prisoners!

The writer was a passenger on the bus.



Mumia Abu-Jamal's book, 'JAILHOUSE LAWYERS: Prisoners defending prisoners v. the U.S.A.' is available at Leftbooks.com



The Raleigh/Wake County People's Assembly organized a rally on May 8 in front of a Raleigh City Council meeting to demand that the city advocate for a federally funded public jobs program. More than 30 people, including youth and students of color from Raleigh and other community leaders,

were present. The Raleigh People's Assembly will propose a resolution demanding that the city of Raleigh endorse and advocate for a publicly funded jobs program and for federal money to facilitate public-sector job creation in the city. Supporters of this resolution include Black Workers for Justice,

Raleigh City Workers Union-UE 150, the Bail Out the People Movement, NAACP North Carolina President Rev. William Barber and the state's AFL-CIO, along with many other organizations and hundreds of individuals.

— Report and photo by Vidya Sankar

Detroiters face growing repression, police killings

Continued from page 1

suspect was wounded at the scene and taken into custody.

Ron Scott, spokesperson for DCAPB and co-host of "Fighting for Justice," told the media after these shootings that the incident was a reflection of the increasing tension between the Detroit police and people in the city. Police Chief Warren Evans, in response to a question during a press conference on the shooting of the officers, said Scott's remarks were "insensitive and ignorant."

There was a flood of attacks from the police against Scott and the DCAPB in the corporate-owned media. Scott contends that his words were taken out of context and refused to issue the apology demanded by law enforcement and the media.

On a local Fox 2 news program called "Let It Rip," Scott debated the police chief and three other media and legal pundits for the network. The program was widely viewed and the station was inundated with calls asking for the segment to be re-aired. The program was put up in full on

the station's website a few days later.

Other crises face Detroiters

Detroit's state-appointed emergency financial manager Robert Bobb has not resolved the budget deficit of the public school system. Since Bobb's appointment in 2009, the Detroit public school system has sunk another \$100 million into debt.

A court challenge on behalf of the elected school board, parents, teachers and community organizations won a preliminary injunction in Wayne County Circuit Court against the closing of 45 schools in the district. It also halted numerous policies proposed by Bobb that would further privatize the system and weaken local control.

But this injunction was overturned by the Michigan Court of Appeals. It ruled within several hours after the hearing that the Detroit Board of Education did not show that any irreparable harm would be done if Bobb implemented the plans for school closings and downsizing. The appeal to overturn the injunction was litigated by Republican Attorney General Mike Cox, who argued on behalf of Demo-

cratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm. Granholm had appointed Bobb to gut Detroit's public schools.

The political significance of this episode in the struggle over the future of public education in Detroit is that both the Democratic and Republican parties held identical positions, siding with state and private interests over the right of the people in a majority African-American city to run their school system.

Private groups such as the Skillman Foundation are playing significant roles in drafting and promoting corporate-oriented plans to remold and liquidate public education in favor of charter schools for profit.

In another issue related to law enforcement, the U.S. Justice Department has not responded to demands by the Muslim community and its supporters for an investigation into the assassination of Imam Luqman Ameen Abdullah, who was shot 20 times by FBI agents on Oct. 28. Abdullah and several followers and family members had been lured to a warehouse in neighboring Dearborn under the guise

of unloading merchandise from a truck.

On May 15, a group of inter-faith religious leaders announced they were sending a letter to President Barack Obama demanding he direct Attorney General Eric Holder to address the concerns of the Muslim community and others regarding the imam's unprovoked killing and the subsequent prosecution of a number of his family members and followers.

On May 17 Holder spoke at Wayne State University Law School. Members of the DCAPB and the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice held a demonstration there demanding an end to police terror against the people of Detroit.

The protest drew attention to the killing of Aiyana Jones and also raised other issues concerning the lack of implementation of two federal consent decrees regarding use of lethal force and detention facilities within the Detroit Police Department. Detroit cops have been under a federally appointed monitor for nearly seven years, after a three-year investigation by the U.S. Justice Department. However, police brutality and misconduct continue.

Plans are underway to do further outreach in the community where Aiyana Jones was killed. Brenda Cowans, who lives in the neighborhood where the police raid took place, attended the demonstration outside the WSU Law School and welcomed interest by MECAWI to work with the community to combat police brutality in the area.

"We must speak out and fight injustice because otherwise we will be misused by the system," said Cowans. □

Faced with atrocious company demands

Miss. catfish workers may strike

By Sean Schafron

Roughly 600 employees of Delta Pride Catfish, Inc., mostly African-American women, may go on strike soon. If the contract the company has offered — using a notorious union-busting legal firm at the negotiating table — is rejected, this would be the second strike against Delta Pride Catfish. The first strike in 1990 is looked upon as a landmark in labor history.

Delta Pride Catfish, a Mississippi company, is paying employees a mere \$8 to \$9 an hour. They haven't had an increase in four years.

But that's not the worst of it.

The company has offered a contract that is atrocious. It would establish a seven-day work week, reduce seniority benefits, eliminate overtime, abolish severance pay should the company close, triple employee contributions to company health insurance over three years, and allow the company to outsource jobs and double the new hire probationary period

— among other things. United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1529 has been in contract negotiations with the company for more than a year.

This isn't the first time the company has received attention for its highly despicable, racist and sexist treatment of Black women employees in the mostly poor Delta region. In 1990 a successful three-month strike took place against the company. The issues then were adverse health effects of speed-up, a five-minute time limit on lavatory use, low wages and 10- to 13-hour workdays.

The strike was the largest of Black workers in Mississippi history and saw the civil rights and labor movements join together. Boycotts were called and scabs were brought in. A company official even threatened a striker with a gun.

The small gains achieved at the time, such as a 75-cent raise, were enough to create a lasting tension between Delta Pride Catfish and its employees.

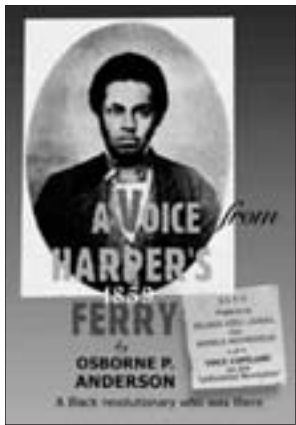
Although earlier reports suggested a vote

on the contract in the third week of May, union representative Leon Sheppard Jr. spoke with Workers World by phone on May 17 and confirmed that a contract ratification vote as well as a strike vote would take place on either May 26 or 27 and that there have been no further negotiations. □

A Voice from Harper's Ferry 1859

By Osborne P. Anderson, a Black freedom fighter. Prefaces by Mumia Abu-Jamal, Monica Moorehead and Vince Copeland on the 'Unfinished Revolution.'

A unique book from the raid on Harper's Ferry by Osborne P. Anderson, the only Black combatant to survive the raid. His account of this turning point in the struggle against slavery—an armed attack by Black and white volunteers on a citadel of the South—refutes those who try to minimize the role of African-American people in fighting for their freedom.



Available at www.Leftbooks.com

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Students walk out to save schools

By Bill Bateman
Providence, R.I.

Some 300 students from Hope High School here walked out of class on May 13. They marched first to the Providence School Department, where 200 other students joined them. Their numbers swelled to 500 for the final leg of their march to Providence City Hall, where they took control of the building from top to bottom for half an hour.

Hope High students are furiously defending the progress made at their school during the past decade. The school had been so dysfunctional that the State of Rhode Island had seized control of it. Millions of dollars were pumped into additional personnel and renovations to the building itself.

Extra teachers and advisors were hired, thus lowering class sizes and increasing advisory hours for each student. The old system of eight 50-minute classes was scrapped and replaced with a four 90-minute block system in which the

students had enough time to “wrap their minds around” a subject and really learn.

The superintendent of schools and the mayor want to end all these “extras” — extra teachers and advisors — as well as the 90-minute classes. They want to close schools and pack students into larger classes with fewer teachers, less space and less resources. This is equivalent to stamping out creativity among working-class youth and crushing their hopes and dreams of progress and equality.

The well-educated, confident, empowered inner-city youth of color from Hope High are rebelling against this plan. They say they don’t want to be “put back in a bag.” The system accidentally “over-educated” them and now they “know too much” — they know that another world is possible. They won’t easily be reined in or contained.

The S.O.S. Coalition to Save Our Schools joined the Hope High marchers and met some of their leaders, who eagerly took the S.O.S. banner reading “Save our schools! Fund public education!” to



WW PHOTO: BILL BATEMAN

Hope High students occupy Providence City Hall.

the head of the march.

These students will be an important part of the fight to make quality public ed-

ucation a right for all. They also are likely to become youth leaders in the growing movement for People’s Assemblies. □

Student protest met with police brutality

By Caleb T. Maupin
Cleveland

While leafleting outside Cleveland’s Collinwood High School in support of police brutality survivor Rebecca Whitby, some activists met 16-year-old student Seth Bartlekamp. He announced a student walkout on May 13 to oppose the impending closing of 16 city schools and layoffs of 800 teachers and other school employees across the city’s school district.

With the goal of organizing an action intended to build solidarity among students, teachers and other school workers, Bartlekamp contacted the Cleveland Teachers Union and community organizations about supporting the walkout.

Despite threats Bartlekamp says were made against him and other students by school authorities if they carried out the walkout, he sent out a Facebook message announcing the action. Many students signed on in support and pledged to walk out on May 13, to call for a stop to the school cutbacks, layoffs and closings.

On the morning of the walkout, this writer and Adam Gluntz, organizers for Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST), which also works with Bail Out the People Movement, greeted students who had walked out of school and joined with them.

All the students who participated in the walkout, except Bartlekamp, are African American, as is the majority population at Collinwood High School and throughout the Cleveland school district. They were concerned about the impact of the school cutbacks on the quality of education in their school and their community.



FIST VIDEO: CALEB MAUPIN

Still from video shows Cleveland police arresting DeAsia and Destiny Bronaugh.

Inside the school, the hallways filled with hundreds of students who wanted to join the walkout. Students reported that in order to prevent them from leaving, the doors were chained shut by school security guards.

Outside the school, the vice principal walked down the steps to speak with those who had walked out and told them he had called the police. When the police arrived, they grabbed the shirts of protesting students and handcuffed them.

Students say that police officers, moving to arrest sisters DeAsia and Destiny Bronaugh, slammed them against a police car and then onto the ground. They say that a police sergeant thrust his knee into Destiny Bruno’s neck and smashed her face into the pavement while she moaned in pain and said she was having an asth-

ma attack. Another officer threatened to use a Taser against her.

She called out, “We were protesting at our school and they’re trying to arrest us!”

As protesters called for the police to let the women go, even the vice principal agreed and called out to the police.

A police officer threatened to arrest those who were videotaping the attack and told them that protests were “unacceptable.”

Maupin, who had videotaped the police assault, and other FIST members posted the video on YouTube and informed area media about it. Organizers were interviewed on radio station WTAM and asked listeners to call the police station to demand the women’s release.

Inside the high school, Bartlekamp reports he and another student were brutally interrogated by the police without a parent or guardian present or even being notified. Bartlekamp says he was threatened with institutionalization if he did not answer their questions and that his mother was threatened with arrest if the protests continued and if she defended her son.

Outrage spread throughout the city as the video of the racist assault became public. About 40 students and other activists defiantly marched to the police station, chanting all the way. Many told of police abuses which occur regularly outside the school and nearby.

An after-school protest against the brutal arrests was called for the next day, when more than 200 students joined the protest as school ended. They loudly

chanted, “Save our schools!” and “Money for schools, not the banks!” One student held up a sign reading “Youth need jobs, not jails!” when asked by reporters why he was there.

Some news media red-baited FIST members instead of focusing on the police attack. Martha Grevatt, an autoworker and organizer for the Cleveland chapter of the Bail Out the People Movement, criticized the media for red-baiting the organizers, who had come to the defense of the students being assaulted.

Speaking to the media, Bartlekamp thanked FIST for its support of the student-initiated walkout. Other community members thanked FIST as well.

Cleveland FIST member Maupin said that, “I came here to stand against an injustice and it’s shameful that the media are attacking me for my political beliefs.”

That evening, attorneys for the American Civil Liberties Union and local civil rights attorney James Hardiman obtained the release of the Bronaugh sisters, after a lengthy meeting with the Cleveland Police Department’s internal affairs section. The women are being charged with assault on a police officer, aggravated disorderly conduct, truancy and resisting arrest.

Support is growing for those arrested. A Collinwood Defense Committee is being organized on behalf of all 12 of the students who joined in the walkout and have been suspended for five days. Also, local and national worker-activists, including educators, have signed a call for trade unionists to support the students.

Organizers request calls to the Fifth District police station at 216-623-5618 and 216-623-6500 to demand all charges against the students be dropped and to protest the police attack against them. They also ask that calls be made to the Cleveland Board of Education at 216-574-8000 and Collinwood High School at 216-451-8782 to demand that the suspensions be rescinded and that Seth Bartlekamp not be expelled.

The Bail Out the People Movement has posted an online petition supporting the students. It asserts that the “Brutal attack was a deliberate attempt to intimidate students and crush the potential to build labor-student-community solidarity and is a racist attack on Cleveland’s African-American community.” Sign on at www.bailoutpeople.org. □

PARATIONS edom Struggle

Workers World newspaper. Edited by Monica Moorehead.

Oppression & Self-Determination Larry Holmes

Slavery to Wage Slavery Sam Marcy

Resistance LeiLani Dowell

Is Key Monica Moorehead

r of Struggle for Human Rights & Global Justice!

y of Slavery, Sharecropping and Segregation Consuela Lee

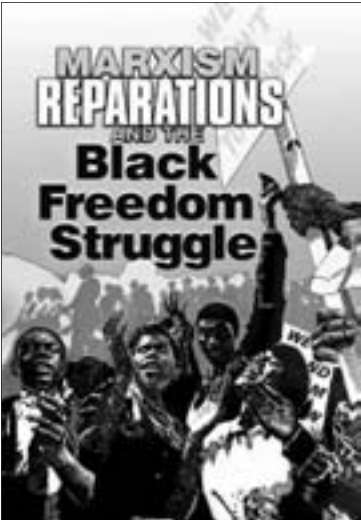
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Delta Larry Hales

ot Sanctions Pat Chin

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COVER ILLUSTRATION: SAHU BARRON

A temporary reprieve

Mistrial declared in Whitby case

By Sharon Danann
Cleveland

Rebecca Whitby and her family are celebrating a temporary reprieve. Judge Stuart Friedman declared a mistrial on May 14 before the jury had even been selected. The charges, including resisting arrest and obstruction, that Whitby and her mother are facing arose from the brutal beating of Whitby by police in the family's home in April 2009 and her mother's attempts to protect her daughter from repeated punches in the face.

Although they face felony charges with possible sentences totaling 50 years in prison, Whitby and her mother — also named Rebecca Whitby — courageously refused all plea deals offered to them, including misdemeanors and probation-only. The felony charges were concocted after the family filed a report with the Police Department's Office of Professional Standards and the Civil Rights Division of the FBI.

Marva Patterson, Whitby's aunt, explained: "Refusing to plea bargain is

incredibly important. When you plead guilty, you lose your constitutional rights, such as the right to redress and the right to cross-examine the police officers who brought the charges."

"I think the judge did not want to have to choose between the police allegations and us with all the evidence we have," stated Timothy Walker, Whitby's father. "It would be ugly. He washed his hands of it."

Widespread community support and the presence of television cameras in the courtroom may have been other motivations for declaring the mistrial. Marches had been held repeatedly, along with rallies at the 5th District police station, Cleveland City Hall and the co-called Justice Center where the trial was about to begin. The streets echoed with cries of "Charge the cops!" and honks of support from passing motorists.

There may be a connection between several of the prosecution witnesses — police officers who were on or near the family's porch during the April 2009 night of horror — and officers who were videotaped this May 13 roughing up two

teenaged women outside Collinwood High School. The students were participating in a protest against teacher and staff layoffs and school closings. They are being represented by an attorney from the American Civil Liberties Union and have nationwide and international support. Whitby's father viewed the videotape and says he recognized some of the same police as being there during the beating of his daughter.

Although more than a year has passed and family members say that investigators at both the CPD and FBI informally told them that the cops who beat Rebecca Whitby committed wrongs, no reports have been produced.

The family believes that the prosecution is currently attempting to tie the night when Whitby was beaten to an accident four years earlier in which she fell from a second-story window. In trying to make the fall look like a suicide attempt,

they could claim that Whitby has schizophrenia.

Such a diagnosis would bolster the officers' assertion to hospital staff in April 2009 that her injuries were self-inflicted, rather than due to their use of excessive force. It might also provide cover for the administration of the powerful psychotropic drug Geodon to Whitby at the hospital against her will, without diagnosis or prescription, apparently to keep her from telling her story.

The prosecution will have to reconcile their schizophrenia theory with the fact that Whitby, now 24 years old, graduated in 2004 from high school with honors in chemistry and, the month following her beating, took college-level exams and passed them.

"To accuse Black women of mental illness is a common tactic. They are weaving this tapestry," says Patterson. "We have to find the one thread to pull it apart." □

After 16 years in prison

Jamie Scott faces health crisis

By Kathy Durkin

Jim Crow injustice has not ended in the state of Mississippi, certainly not for Gladys and Jamie Scott. The sisters have been unjustly incarcerated in a Mississippi prison for 16 years for a crime they did not commit.

The travesty of justice began in 1993 when they were both arrested in Scott County for allegedly participating in a robbery that netted \$11. The following year, each was convicted and sentenced to two life-terms in prison. This was despite the fact that neither of them had a prior record of arrests nor was there any physical evidence implicating them.

In spite of this, a court of appeals refused to overturn their convictions. Further, the U.S. Supreme Court denied their appeals.

The case of the Scott Sisters demonstrates that pervasive and systemic racism not only exists in the Mississippi criminal justice system but extends all the way up to the highest court in this country.

It also shows how nearly impossible it is for many poor people, especially people of color, to get any semblance of justice or fair treatment in the courts and prisons. This also extends to the lack of decent medical care for those who are incarcerated.

Jamie Scott has life-threatening kidney disease. She is being denied regular medications and dialysis and the type of diet required for her condition. In addition to this, she has developed a systemic infection. Although she was very recently rushed by ambulance to a hospital after fainting, she was returned back to prison, to a cell riddled with insects and mold.

Her family and other supporters say that Scott's health problems have pro-



Jamie Scott, above;
Gladys Scott, left.

gressed to such a degree that she must be hospitalized. They assert that she faces a death sentence if she does not immediately receive the medical care that she needs, and that the care being provided by the Mississippi Department of Corrections and Wexford Health Sources, Inc., is wholly inadequate and substandard.

They ask that public pressure be put on the following officials to demand that Jamie Scott be hospitalized immediately, until she is free of infections, and to ensure that her health problems are dealt with fully: Attorney General Eric Holder, Dr. Gloria Perry, Christopher Epps, commissioner of the Mississippi Department of Corrections and Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour. See freethescottsisisters.blogspot.com for telephone, fax and email contact information.

At this time, legal assistance is also needed so that the Scott Sisters' appeals can be reviewed and further avenues can be found for pursuing relief and exoneration. Letters should be sent to the American Bar Association asking for their assistance in providing pro bono attorneys. Email addresses and a sample letter are available online at the above-cited website.

A national campaign is growing to demand justice for the Scott Sisters. It is essential that all across the country, progressive organizations and individuals increase the pressure on public officials to demand their freedom. □

Special to Workers World
New York

New York Gov. David Paterson decided at the end of April to force the state's unionized workers to give up raises and other contract improvements by slapping them with a one-day furlough. Since the budget was overdue and New York is facing a \$9.2 billion deficit, he pushed the furlough through the state Legislature on May 10 by threatening to shut down the state government if it didn't pass his bill.

The four unions representing the 100,000 state workers to be furloughed went to federal court in Albany two days later and got a temporary restraining order (TRO) blocking the furlough. There will be more hearings on the issue on May 26.

This call for a furlough was really a lockout, an employer's attempt to get the workers to accept what the employer dictates. The Bureau of Labor Statistics puts lockouts into the same category as strikes, which are forbidden to public employees in New York state under the Taylor Law.

When the furlough passed on May 10, the four unions involved held a demonstration of around 5,000 people at the state Capitol. They brought the inflatable rat that unions use to protest at a scab work site. The four unions are the Civil Service Employees Association; the Public Employees Federation; the United University Professions, which represents workers at the State University of New York; and the Professional Staff Congress, which represents staff and faculty at the senior colleges of the City University of New York.

The CSEA and PEF also held demonstrations in the following New York state cities: Buffalo; Elmira; Hornell; Rochester; Syracuse; Binghamton; Utica; Poughkeepsie; the boroughs of the Bronx, Brooklyn and Manhattan in New York City; Hauppauge; and Watertown. CUNY Contingents United held one in front of Manhattan's John Jay College. Earlier the PSC had held a demonstration at Paterson's Manhattan office.

Courtney Brunelle, a political coordinator for CSEA, told the demonstration in Buffalo, "We didn't create this mess. Wall

Street did. We do our job. You do yours."

Paterson and the media in New York that represent big business made a big point of insisting that the unions "share the sacrifices and reduce the deficit before the state runs out of money." The New York Times (May 15) is still insisting a furlough is necessary, as well as pay lags and pension cuts.

The unions feel that a contract must bind both sides. They were shocked that their supposed allies in the state Legislature, to whom they had given millions of dollars in donations and boots-on-the-ground aid in the elections, had deserted them and gone over to the other side in the "class struggle" — as one top leader put it.

Ken Brynien, head of the Public Employees Federation, said he wanted the Legislature to know that the furloughs are illegal "and even though some of them believe that they can't change this temporary appropriations bill, that you have to vote it up or down. If they think it's clearly illegal, they do have an absolute right to vote it down and send it back."

Even if the governor gets everything from the unions that he and Wall Street want — which would amount to \$250 million — that still wouldn't solve the state's budget crisis. The state is going to have to increase its revenue.

The main target for revenue enhancements in New York should be Wall Street. Just rebating 80 percent of the stock transfer tax would bring in \$3.2 billion, according to a union-sponsored report. Adding an additional tax bracket for incomes over \$1 million would bring in \$1 billion. These are just the two largest enhancements.

More than 20 states, according to Newsday of April 30, have responded to the financial collapse by reducing their state budgets. California, Oregon and Hawaii in particular have succeeded in imposing furloughs. While the TRO has postponed the struggle in New York, the crisis is still sharp. No matter how thoroughly and publicly the Democrats in the state Legislature have betrayed the interests of working people, some labor leaders are still tied to their coattails.

The writer is a state worker.

PUERTO RICO

Repression arouses solidarity for student strikers

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

The student strike and sit-in at the University of Puerto Rico, almost four weeks old as of May 18, has become the main political and class struggle issue on the island since UPR management stepped up its repressive tactics. Several unions have called for a 24-hour work stoppage on May 18. Many unions and other organizations are joining the call.

From the beginning, unions — like the university professors’ union, APPU — plus social and political organizations and the community in general, who regard the UPR as a national heritage, have backed the student strike. Now, poets, singers and artists have joined the call.

Parents have been the students’ most fervent supporters, going to campus now that the UPR Board of Trustees has ordered aggressive police tactics. They come showing affection and support, risking arrest, defying police who rough them up and throwing food over the police lines to their children. On videos one can see the parents saying how proud they are of their children’s action.

A week earlier it seemed as if a tentative agreement was in place. On May 8, the student negotiating committee from the Río Piedras campus had met with Board President Ygri Rivera to discuss several key points. Before the ink dried, however, the UPR administration, quoting their own interpretation of a vaguely written agreement, turned around and broke off talks. Students had been about to call a general student body meeting to ratify the accord.

According to their own interpretation of the agreement, the board made almost no substantive changes to their original proposal, which had been rejected by the students, leading to the strike.

No students had ever crossed the picket lines. Management apparently hoped the “silent majority” of students who had only passively supported the strike would reject a strike vote.

But on May 13, students overwhelmingly voted to continue the strike. The following day, management ordered police, cadets and riot squads to crush the students’ determined resistance. The board and a former FBI director in Puerto Rico, Police Superintendent José Figueroa Sancha, ordered these forces to cordon off the campus.

They allowed no one to enter, not even parents and sympathizers bringing food, water, medicine and other necessities to the students inside the campus in a tent city. Police beat and drove away with a student’s father who was bringing food to his son.

UPR students were protesting the university’s draconian cuts and new policies that would lead to the privatization of the main public university on the island. They want the repeal of C98, a ruling eliminating tuition exemptions for honor students, athletes and others, which hurts Puerto Rico’s poorest people. They demanded transparency regarding UPR’s fiscal operations and that the board suspend a summer-course tuition hike.

On April 19, the student negotiating committee sent UPR President José de la Torre a letter with a detailed list of proposals that could avert fiscal crisis. After a 48-hour stoppage failed to bring the administration to negotiate, students began the strike on April 23.

Police aggression boomerangs

Since the increase of repression starting May 14, many unions and organiza-



WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

New York protest in support of Puerto Rican students.

tions are keeping a 24-hour presence in front of several gates of the campus. UTIER, the militant union of electrical workers, set up a tent in front of one of the main gates and is coordinating food and supplies donations.

Spanish poet and singer Joaquín Sabina made the student strike the focal point of his May 15 concert. Several Puerto Rican artists invited to the stage by Sabina joined with the legendary Silverio Pérez, who invited all artists to show up the following morning in front of the UPR to defy the cops by bringing food to the students.

That day famous Puerto Rican artists, student athletes, unions and other political organizations and the general population all participated in a very lively picket line with slogans and songs shouted to the rhythm of congas, amplified by gigantic speakers. They shouted “Lucha sí, entrega

no” (Struggle yes, surrender never) and “Obreros y estudiantes, unidos y adelante” (Workers and students united and forward).

HEEND, the union that represents the non-teaching workers of the UPR, initiated a work stoppage May 17, effectively closing down the Medical Sciences Campus and the Central Administration offices. HEEND’s march stopped traffic at one of the major avenues during the morning rush hour. They said the stoppage will continue until the administration meets with the students.

The MSC had been the only one of the 11 UPR campuses remaining open. Students there held a 24-hour solidarity strike last week. Though they support the strike’s goals, students at MSC are responsible for keeping the Medi-

cal Center open — it’s the largest public medical institution for the poor — and decided not to join an indefinite strike.

From abroad, renowned Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano sent a solidarity message to the students and a letter to Puerto Rican Gov. Luis Fortuño. Puerto Ricans from all over the world can send messages to a Facebook page students opened. Messages and websites from Cuba and other Latin American countries have been circulating over the Internet. The Boston School Bus Drivers Union faxed a letter to Fortuño condemning the repression and asking that the students’ demands be heard.

Political issues behind the strike

The financial and economic crisis that erupted in the U.S. unleashed a tsunami

Continued on page 11

As Thai army threatens bloodbath

Workers, farmers risk lives in political battle

By John Catalinotto

May 18 — The rural and urban poor of Thailand have entered the political arena in unprecedented numbers. Even a threatened bloodbath by the military-backed regime may not be able to reverse the impact of this awakening. Whatever the immediate outcome of the confrontation of urban and rural poor with the Thai military in Bangkok, this struggle will change the political climate and weaken U.S. imperialism’s role in Thailand.

Thousands of poor rural and urban Thais, called the red-shirts because they wear red T-shirts, have been occupying posh areas of the capital since March, demanding that the current government resign and there be new elections. After one sharp clash in April, in which the military killed about 20 protesters, a stalemate between the military-backed regime and the mass-backed opposition lasted until mid-May.

There was evidence that individual soldiers in the conscript army as well as some officers were reluctant to be used to repress a popular uprising.

Starting on May 13, troops opened fire on the demonstrators. Over the next four days they killed another 37 people as they sniped at protest leaders and media reporters, along with rank-and-file protesters. The troops have overwhelming firepower. Demonstrators have been courageously fighting back, using hand-made explosives and firebombs and setting up

barricades of burning tires in the capital and on some of the roads throughout the country.

Bangkok, the Thai capital, is home to 15 million of the 67 million Thais. It is where the political fate of the country is usually determined. The red-shirts are also very strong in the rural Northeast of Thailand, however, and even if defeated in the capital could continue an uprising from there.

Not only the government party but also the leading opposition politicians have kept Thailand a loyal cog in the world imperialist system. As in any mass action, political leadership in the current stand-off remains extremely important. Nevertheless, the opposition has opened a mass struggle both in Bangkok and in the rural provinces that may escape these bounds.

Background of Thailand

In the 19th century the British and French imperialists took over most of South and Southeast Asia, dividing it up into their colonies. Thailand, however, which was called Siam until 1939, remained a nominally independent monarchy and buffer between French Indochina and British-controlled Burma and India. Following World War II, U.S. imperialism replaced its European colonialist counterparts as the big outside power in the region.

The Pentagon was unable to stop the people of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia from winning independence, but it held onto its military bases in Thailand. During the war against Vietnam, the U.S. flew 80

percent of its reconnaissance and bombing raids against North Vietnam from its seven Thai bases and used the country as a rest and recreation area for its troops. The Pentagon maintains close ties with the Thai military, which has more than 1 million conscript troops.

The leader of the opposition party, the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship or UDD, is former Primer Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who was ousted by a coup in 2006. Thaksin is himself an enormously wealthy telecommunications entrepreneur. He has a reputation as a populist, however, as his government provided nearly free health care and other benefits to the very poor and won record voting support in 2005.

Regime threatens firepower

Current Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva represents the traditional Thai elite. He is in power through a coup and relies on the military to keep him there. Commenting on Thai television on May 15, Abhisit said, “We cannot retreat now.” It was a threat to use the military’s full force against the civilian demonstrators.

On May 13, a Thai army sniper shot Major Gen. Khattya Sawasdiapol in the head, a half hour into an interview with New York Times reporter Stephen Fuller, whose head was also grazed by the shot. Gen. Khattya was the highest officer to have joined the opposition.

While the leadership of the UDD has offered to compromise to end the standoff

and hold elections — which they expect to win — the regime is giving them no such choice at this time. It refuses to guarantee their safety or impunity from prosecution. This may make a bloody confrontation inevitable.

If the troops are ordered to slaughter the people, and the people refuse to retreat, this creates a testing point for military discipline. The class and family interests of the soldiers and lower officers place them closer to the red-shirts than to the elitist regime.

According to a May 17 Reuters report, “Large numbers of soldiers of lower ranks and some senior officers who have been sidelined after Thaksin was toppled sympathized with the protesters, while the military’s top brass are at the other end of the political spectrum, allied with royalists and business elites.” While the British and U.S. media always speak in the name of democracy, the article reflects the real concerns of the imperialists as it warns: “If the army fails to quell the unrest, other fissures in Thai society could flare into the open, pushing the crisis dangerously close to a long-discussed and much-feared tipping point toward a mass underclass uprising.”

On the other hand, the Thai regime and the top generals know that if the government cracks down to try to quell the protest, it may unleash a protracted struggle that involves the mass of urban and rural poor of Thailand in determining their own destiny. □

No good war

With 30 million under- and unemployed, cops shooting Black children in Detroit, Arizona persecuting immigrants, all states and cities cutting education, pensions and health care, and an oil slick destroying one of the most beautiful and fecund bodies of water on earth, it's understandable if people lose track of U.S. imperialism's foreign adventures. But it's necessary to constantly bring the struggle against war and occupation back to the front burners.

With the Pentagon still occupying Iraq and Afghanistan, still threatening Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea — and still probing every other part of the world — there is always the possibility that ugly imperialist war will replace the economic or domestic political headlines. This week in mid-May, the almost nine-year-old occupation of Afghanistan is back in the front pages.

Last December, the Obama administration escalated the U.S. military presence in that Central Asian country, sending 30,000 more official troops and an unknown number of mercenaries. It even dragged some of Washington's reluctant NATO allies into the war, along with some now rightist-ruled Eastern European states.

The administration said a strong show of NATO force and military success would split the Afghan resistance, which it always refers to as "the Tal-

iban," thus leading to a pro-imperialist settlement and eventual withdrawal of U.S.-NATO troops.

The highly publicized invasion of Marja province followed. A public relations "success," it was a military nothing and a political disaster.

An even bigger offensive is now promised for Kandahar, another public relations "turning point" for the war.

Responding to the U.S.-NATO offensive, Afghan resistance fighters struck two sensitive spots: the capital, Kabul, and the U.S. Air Field at Bagram, infamous as a torture place for prisoners of the Pentagon war machine. Five U.S. troops and a Canadian colonel died in the Kabul explosion, along with many others, and at least five U.S. troops were wounded in a firefight at the well-guarded base. The deaths brought U.S. troops killed in Afghanistan to 1,000, half of them in the last two years of the nine-year occupation.

The message for everyone is that the U.S.-NATO war and occupation have aroused a resistance movement based in a large sector of the Afghan masses and that this resistance is not only justified, it can inflict casualties on the occupation troops.

The message to the U.S. progressive and anti-war movement is that ending the Afghan war better stay on our front burners even as we intervene in and develop the struggle for jobs and against racism at home. □

An appreciation LENA HORNE civil rights pioneer on & off the screen



Top, Horne singing "Stormy Weather," her signature song in 1943 movie, and at 1963 March on Washington.

By Monica Moorehead

Just days before the great Lena Horne passed away on May 9 at the age of 92, I was watching one of my all-time favorite movie musicals, "Stormy Weather." The groundbreaking 1943 movie featured an incredibly talented all-Black cast that included Horne, then a 26-year-old singer, and the legendary tap dancer Bill "Bojangles" Robinson. Also in the cast were Cab Calloway and his orchestra, the Nicholas Brothers and the Katherine Dunham dance troupe.

Notwithstanding the degrading, stereotypical characters that African-American actors, male and female, were forced to play in this movie and countless others put out by Hollywood, especially during the 1930s and 1940s, Horne consistently refused to be straightjacketed in such roles.

In fact, due to her extraordinary talent, stunning good looks, perseverance and defiance, Horne became the first Black actor to be signed to a long-term contract by a major Hollywood studio: seven years with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. During the mid-1940s, she became the highest-paid Black performer in the U.S.

Before she made history, Horne started her show business career as a singer at the Cotton Club in Harlem at the age of 16. The club's white management practiced a racist policy of hiring Black female dancers — mainly light-skinned — to perform in scanty clothing for whites-only customers. At the club, Horne sang with the great jazz pianist and composer Duke Ellington and his orchestra. She then made her Broadway debut in 1934.

Before her breakthrough major role in "Stormy Weather," Horne could get only nonspeaking, singing roles in musicals. She was viewed by Vogue Magazine as "Hollywood's first black beauty, sex symbol, singing star."

In her 1965 autobiography "Lena," she remarked on how Hollywood treated her: "They didn't make me into a maid, but they didn't make me into anything else either. I became a butterfly pinned to a column singing away in Movieland.

"I was unique in that I was a kind of black that white people could accept. I was their daydream. I had the worst kind of acceptance because it was never for how great I was or what I contributed. It was because of the way I looked." (Los Angeles Times, May 10)

A monumental travesty that Hollywood committed was when, in 1950, MGM did not even offer Horne the role of Julie, a "mulatto" character, in the movie musical "Show Boat." The role went to white actor Ava Gardner, who used brownish make-up. In an earlier anthology film, "As the Clouds Roll By," Horne had been allowed to perform a song as Julie.

Surviving McCarthyism; standing up for civil rights

In the early 1940s, Horne became good friends with actor-singer and political activist Paul Robeson and with Black leftist historian W.E.B. Du Bois. As a result of her friendship with them, along with other progressives such as Gene Kelly, Horne became involved in progressive organizations like the Council for African Affairs and the Hollywood Independent Citizens' Committee of the Arts, Sciences and Profes-

sions. These organizations and others were dubbed "Communist fronts" by the House Un-American Activities Committee during the anti-Communist witch-hunt era.

Horne was "blacklisted," like countless other entertainers, and labeled as a Communist sympathizer by the McCarthyites. For seven years, she was unable to find work in the movies or on television. Instead, she sang in nightclubs and concert halls. She also made records and albums.

Horne took numerous individual stances against racist discrimination. During a USO show in 1945 at an Army base at Fort Reilly, Kan., she refused to sing before a segregated audience when African-American GIs were forced to sit behind German prisoners of war.

Lena Horne performed in some of the most prestigious concert halls around the world. Her fame, however, did not prevent her from being confronted with racism in the U.S., whether in the North or the South. When she overheard a white man call her a racist epithet in a Los Angeles nightclub, she injured him by throwing an ashtray, a table lamp and drinking glasses at him. Many Black people applauded her response.

When Black performers, including Horne, faced racism from white neighbors in Hollywood, "Felix Young, a white man, signed for the house as if he was going to rent it," Ms. Horne said. "When the neighbors found out, Humphrey Bogart, who lived right across the street from me, raised hell with them for passing around a petition to get rid of me." Bogart, she said, "sent word over to the house that if anybody bothered me, please let him know." (New York Times, May 9)

In 1963, Lena Horne participated in the historic March on Washington for civil rights led by Dr. Martin Luther King. She also sang at many civil rights rallies, including one held in the aftermath of the 1965 Selma to Montgomery march.

Lena Horne was admired around the world, not only for her talent but for her integrity and her anti-racist activism. In 1964, Cuban filmmaker Santiago Álvarez cut a five-minute political film called "Now," a powerful montage of Civil Rights-era photos and news clips set to the moving voice of Horne. (blackleftunity.webs.com/westandwithcuba.htm)

At the age of 80, Horne reflected, "My identity is very clear to me now. I am a black woman. I'm free. I no longer have to be a 'credit.' I don't have to be a symbol to anybody; I don't have to be a first to anybody. I don't have to be an imitation of a white woman that Hollywood sort of hoped I'd become. I'm me, and I'm like nobody else." (New York Times, May 9)

From now on, whenever I see "Stormy Weather," I will continue to feel a greater appreciation for it thanks to the one and only Lena Horne. □

BP oil spill & capitalism

Continued from page 2

replaced a progressive government in Iran with the shah. BP's long list of environmental and industrial accidents, for which it received only token fines, belies the company's rhetoric about social responsibility.

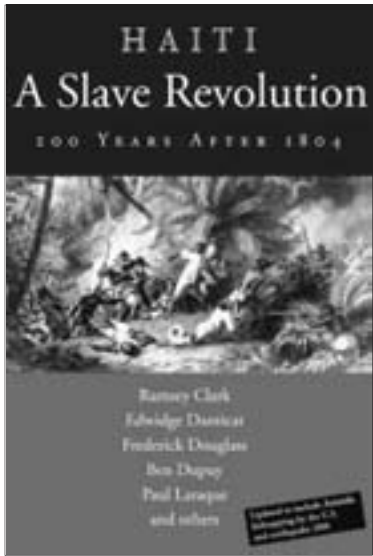
Although the Barack Obama administration and many in the U.S. Congress have delivered scathing criticisms of BP and demanded that it pay for the cleanup, it is doubtful that, absent a determined struggle from below, there will be much accountability. Already, the government has announced that deep-sea drilling will continue in the Gulf. As usual, society at large — the working class — will end up paying the costs.

In 1949, an eminent scientist, Albert Einstein, noted the contradictions between nature and society on the one hand and big business on the other:

"Private capital tends to become con-

centrated in few hands The result of these developments is an oligarchy of private capital, the enormous power of which cannot be effectively checked even by a democratically organized political society The consequence is that the representatives of the people do not in fact sufficiently protect the interests of the underprivileged sections of the population." ("Why Socialism," Monthly Review, 1949)

What is needed is an end to the capitalist system and its replacement with a new system, socialism, that is based on peoples' needs instead of profits. Socialism cannot guarantee that there will never be natural disasters, or even human-made ones. But socialist planning, which takes responsibility for the entire society, represents the only hope for humanity to solve the enormous social and environmental problems the world faces today. □



Will be available At Leftbooks.org and bookstores around the country

HAITI: A Slave Revolution 200 Years after 1804

Look for the release of a second edition that includes Aristide's kidnapping by the U.S. and the 2010 earthquake.

First published in 2004 as a joint project of the International Action Center and the Haiti Support Network. This is not a traditional history book or textbook, but a people's history. In the preface the editors state: "This book is going to combat 200 years of racist indoctrination and propaganda about the Haitian Revolution. It is essential to challenge these stereotypes in order to build true, informed solidarity with Haiti." Currently out of print, "Haiti: A Slave Revolution" can be read online at www.iacenter.org/haiti.

47 years after liberation

Imperialism, in decline,

still trying to dominate African peoples

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

The Organization of African Unity was formed on May 25, 1963, in Addis Ababa. Thus this May 25 is the 47th anniversary of Africa Liberation Day, since the OAU’s founding took place in the framework of the overall struggle for national independence on the continent and in the Caribbean, as well as the African-American freedom movement inside the United States.

In 2010 there are 53 member states on the African continent which reconsolidated in 2002 as the African Union. In the Caribbean there are more than 12 independent states in CARICOM, a regional organization, in addition to revolutionary Cuba, which played a decisive role in the total liberation of southern Africa during the 1970s and 1980s. In the United States, since 1963, the African-American people have won through mass struggle the passage of several civil rights and voting rights laws that led to the election of thousands of political officials.

Nonetheless, world imperialism, led by the U.S. ruling class, still seeks to dominate the domestic affairs and foreign policy of African nations and the lives of peoples of African descent throughout the world. With the deepening of the global economic crisis that began in the U.S. during 2007, the African people are facing monumental challenges in their historical efforts to reverse the impact of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism.

A 2009 report by the organization of African Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors that was established to monitor the crisis said that, “Although most African countries are not on track to meet Millennium Development Goals (to lessen poverty), Africa had made steady progress over the last decade, building the foundations for higher growth and poverty reduction. This more optimistic picture is now being undermined by factors outside its control.” (African Perspectives and Recommendations to the G20, March 21, 2009)

This analysis of the way the continent has been affected by the world capitalist crisis continues by saying, “While the initial effects of the financial crisis were slow to materialize in Africa, the impact is now becoming clear. It is sweeping away firms, mines, jobs, revenues, and livelihoods; it is in short a full-blown development crisis.”

In the executive summary of this report it goes as far as stating, “For the first time in a decade there will be zero growth per capita. This note provides evidence of the effects, and suggests action needed. For Africa no less than elsewhere time is of essence; decisive remedial action is needed now.”

In the West Indies, the Caribbean Development Bank issued a report on the “Global Financial Crisis,” which identified key areas where the impact has been felt in this region. The report points to the decline in gross domestic product growth rates, an

actual contraction in GDP, increased fiscal pressures, increased pressure on currency reserves, rising levels of protection, rising current account deficits, declining credit and other financial flows as well as declining asset quality. (The Global Financial Crisis and the Caribbean: Impact and Response, CDB Response, March 19, 2009)

In the United States, the African-American people have suffered to the greatest degree from the capitalist economic crisis with the highest level of unemployment, loss of homes, health care and pension benefits, in addition to attacks on public education and municipal services. It is important to also note that African Americans have a disproportionately high rate of incarceration and victimization by law enforcement.

Although politicians in the leading capitalist states and other apologists for capitalism have repeated that the world recession is over and a recovery is underway, unemployment and home losses remain high in all the affected countries. The European Union and the International Monetary Fund in May announced a trillion-euro bailout of the currency system, which was threatened by Greece’s inability to repay sovereign debt. In Greece, millions of workers have taken to the streets to oppose the austerity measures being imposed by the state.

This same bailout of the banks and corporations has continued in the U.S. since 2008, when the capitalist state at the behest of the financial institutions provided \$10 trillion in direct giveaways and injections of liquidity to stave off a total collapse. At present the public education system, K-12 as well as colleges and universities, has imposed huge layoffs, service cuts and school closings.

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan of the Obama administration recently announced that K-12 institutions across the U.S. need hundreds of billions of dollars in order to avoid the layoffs of another 300,000 teachers and other educational workers. At the same time, bankers and other corporate interests are allowed to bankrupt cities through demanding cutbacks and high debt service payments to shore up a failing system.

This crisis is further impounded by the huge Pentagon budget of the United States, which outstrips all other states throughout the world combined. The U.S. so-called “war on terrorism” has been an unmitigated disaster for not only the peoples of Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Colombia, Yemen, etc., but is resulting in a precipitous decline in the social wages of working people and the oppressed.

Unity of purpose and action needed

With the worsening crisis in world capitalism, the only real path available to the working and oppressed peoples throughout the world, including Africa, the Caribbean and the U.S., is the development of a broad-based movement to fight the problem at its source. The phenomena of over-

production and the unequal distribution of power and resources require the total mobilization of the masses to demand that the rich pay for the crisis that they created.

We have seen demands raised in Greece and the escalation of industrial actions in South Africa that echo the same theme: that the decline in the standard of living of working people and the oppressed is the direct result of the failed policies of the capitalist class worldwide.

Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of the Republic of Ghana, and leading theoretician and tactician of the African Revolution, stated at the founding of the OAU in 1963 that the root of the problem of underdevelopment lies with the Western imperialist states. Nkrumah recognized that Africa and the world had to move toward socialism in order to ensure real economic

growth and development.

In his book issued at the founding OAU summit in May 1963, Nkrumah wrote, “The fall in world prices of raw materials since the end of the Second World War has deprived the less developed countries of the staggering sum of 574 billion [pound sterling], an amount greater than all the so-called aid which these countries have received from the advanced nations.” (Nkrumah, “Africa Must Unite,” p. 109, 1963)

Nkrumah continued by pointing out that “This in itself represents a denial of tremendous capital for much-wanted development that would not have happened had we newly emergent states been united and strong enough to make our bargaining on the international commodity markets effective.”

Next: Challenges to imperialism.

PUERTO RICO

Repression arouses solidarity

for student strikers

Continued from page 9

on Puerto Rico, reaffirming the old adage: “When the USA has a cold, Puerto Rico gets pneumonia.” As Puerto Rico’s economy is tightly tied to that of the U.S., the colony has no independent recourse.

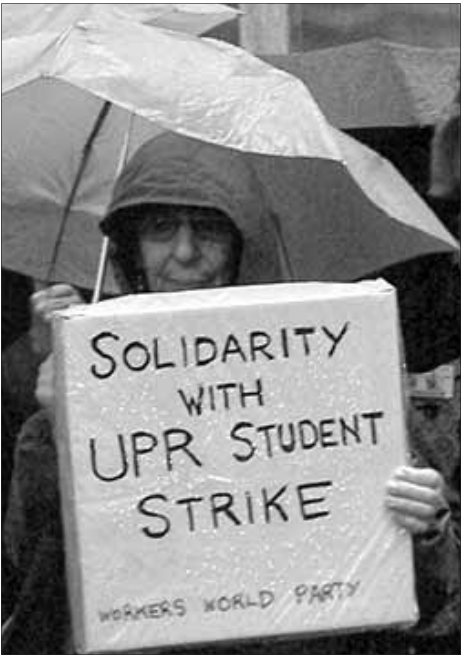
There is a financial crisis for the island and a political crisis for the current administration. On May 14, the Labor Department reported that Puerto Rico’s official unemployment in April was 16.9 percent. This follows massive layoffs, including Fortuño’s layoff of more than 30,000 public workers. Last Oct. 15, unions protested the layoff announcement with a national stoppage.

Gov. Fortuño, of the pro-statehood New Progressive Party — with a strong affiliation to the Republican Party in the U.S. — has imposed Law No. 7, supposedly to solve the serious fiscal crisis. This law calls for new taxes and, in the end, massive layoffs. Later he also imposed the law of Private-Public Alliances, which effectively gives control of Puerto Rico’s main resources to private businesses in a massive privatization offensive, damaging workers’ interests.

No public institution has been left untouched. Fortuño’s attention is focused most on those institutions that have stood up to past administrations and represent independent, nationalist views. Examples include the College of Lawyers, the Puerto Rican Institute of Culture and the UPR. These three have historically been outspoken centers against repression and colonialism.

Well-known Puerto Rican attorney Salvador Tío told Workers World that the reactionary wealthy class of Puerto Rico sees the UPR as a breeding ground for “communists and troublemakers,” a “place of subversion,” and that their vicious attack intended to privatize the university arises from this. Many Puerto Ricans say that the government aims to sell as many UPR units as possible to Fortuño’s pal José Mendez, the wealthy owner of the private Ana G. Méndez Education System.

Norberto Cintrón Fiallo, president of the Caribbean and Latin-American Coordinating Committee, a socialist and labor leader, told WW that the UPR strike is



WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

Workers World Party participated in NYC picket supporting Puerto Rico student strike.

part of the class struggle in Puerto Rico during a crucial and historic time in the island, when the government loyally follows Wall Street’s dictates.

Karlo García, coordinator of the Río Piedras Chapter of the Pro-Independence University Federation (FUPI), echoed these sentiments. García spoke to WW on May 17 from the encampment at UPR Río Piedras while cleaning and straightening up the grounds. Proudly he described the daily tasks that the students carry out while occupying the campus, keeping it free of garbage and in complete order because “this is our university and we want to keep it clean.

“We are struggling so that public education is not sold out. This struggle has transcended to a political level; this is an issue of class. A sector of the bourgeoisie with their neoliberal project want to sell the university, but the working class rejects that because it understands that the UPR is the heritage of the working class in Puerto Rico and will not tolerate its capricious selling to a few.”

Under these conditions, the struggle of the UPR students on all 11 campuses is spreading like wildfire.

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WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

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Rescate europeo confirma que la crisis capitalista se está extendiendo

Los/as trabajadores/as deben unirse para luchar contra los ataques de los banqueros

Por Fred Goldstein

El mensaje más importante que la clase trabajadora debería recibir del reciente rescate europeo y de los altibajos de los mercados de valores, es que el capitalismo está fracasando como un sistema económico y ahora es el momento para que la clase trabajadora emprenda una lucha.

Los gobiernos capitalistas europeos y el Fondo Monetario Internacional han tenido que comprometerse a poner hasta 980 miles de millones de dólares para mantener a los gobiernos de Grecia, Portugal y España financieramente a flote. Los temores de un inminente incumplimiento de la deuda por el gobierno de Grecia y las amenazas de futuros incumplimientos por Portugal y España, provocaron una reunión de emergencia de los Ministros de Finanzas europeos y una fuerte intervención de Washington.

Dieciséis países utilizan el euro, que está controlado por el Banco Central Europeo como una moneda común. Ese banco convino en hacer o garantizar 575 miles de millones de dólares en préstamos. La Unión Europea en su totalidad, compuesta de 27 naciones, prometió 80 miles de millones de dólares adicionales, y el FMI acordó poner otros 325 miles de millones. Esto supuestamente cubrirá los déficits públicos de esos tres países de Europa del sur y otra deuda en peligro del gobierno durante los próximos tres años.

El rescate del gobierno es rescate bancario

El objetivo real es para asegurarse que estos gobiernos puedan pagar sus deudas a los bancos. Así que el rescate del gobierno es también rescate de los bancos, encaminado a impedir un colapso financiero global del tipo que casi tuvo lugar cuando Lehman Brothers fracasó en los Estados Unidos en septiembre de 2008.

Bancos y aseguradoras europeas poseen 193 miles de millones de dólares en deuda del gobierno griego. Pero también tienen 240 miles de millones de dólares en deuda del gobierno de Portugal y 832 miles de millones de España. Grandes bancos europeos también tienen inversiones que están en peligro en bancos griegos.

Gran parte de esta deuda fue incurrida durante los períodos de expansión económica. Aunque la crisis económica capitalista ha reducido la base fiscal de los gobiernos, los bancos todavía quieren su libra de carne, aunque venga de los recortes en los servicios, los salarios de los/as trabajadores/as públicos, las pensiones y los beneficios. El sur de Europa está experimentando crisis presupuestarias y recortes similares a aquellas que tienen lugar en California, Michigan, Rhode Island, Illinois y muchos otros estados en los Estados Unidos.

Las agencias crediticias han bajado la categoría de los bonos del gobierno griego a calidad de “bonos basura”, y la clasificación del crédito de Portugal y España está cayendo. Eso significa que los banqueros y otros tiburones de préstamos

financieros del mundo capitalista ya no prestarán dinero a estos gobiernos o van a cobrar tasas de interés tan altas que los gobiernos no pueden pedir prestado.

Pero los gobiernos tienen que pedir prestado para poder pagar las deudas en que han incurrido por préstamos anteriores. Así que quedan atrapados en una trampa deudora que podría llevar a la morosidad de sus préstamos. Por eso, lo que está ocurriendo en Europa es en realidad un rescate de los bancos.

Apuestas altas para Wall St. y Washington

Wall Street y Washington también tienen un gran interés en este asunto. La administración ejerció una enorme presión para reunir el rescate de billones (millones de millones en USA) de dólares.

El presidente Barack Obama estuvo en el teléfono con la primera ministra alemana Angela Merkel, presionándola para que renunciara a su oposición del rescate. La capital alemana tiene que ser un prestamista importante bajo el plan.

Obama también estuvo en contacto telefónico con el presidente francés, Nicolás Sarkozy. El vicepresidente Joseph Biden se reunió con el Primer Ministro español José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. El secretario del Tesoro, Timothy Geithner, presionó a los ministros de finanzas, mientras que la Reserva Federal se comprometió a suplir dólares a varios bancos centrales europeos en un intercambio de monedas para que pudieran hacer los pagos en dólares, si fuera necesario.

La urgencia de la intervención de Washington se presentó por el hecho de que bancos de EEUU tienen \$3,6 billones expuestos en los bancos europeos, incluyendo \$1 billón en Francia y Alemania y \$200 miles de millones en España, según el Bank for International Settlements. Una cadena de incumplimientos de pago originados por el incumplimiento de Grecia y de otros gobiernos pondría en peligro los bancos de EEUU y podrían ocasionar una nueva crisis financiera en Wall Street.

Además, un colapso económico en Europa podría golpear a las corporaciones estadounidenses que exportan a esos países. Más de una cuarta parte de las ganancias de las 500 principales empresas del índice Standard & Poor's provienen de las exportaciones — muchos de ellas a Europa. Así que la presión para este rescate por parte de la administración Obama no era para salvar a Europa, sino para salvar a Wall Street y a los grandes industrialistas de los EEUU.

Al final de esta cadena financiera están los/as trabajadores/as. Los bancos han estado sangrando a los gobiernos de la Europa meridional. Esto significa el sangrado de los/as trabajadores/as que crean la riqueza y el valor que va al tesoro de los gobiernos y termina siendo pagado de intereses. Los gobiernos capitalistas son conductos para la transferencia de riquezas de los/as trabajadores/as hacia los banqueros.

Ahora que los gobiernos están en una

situación de deuda insostenible, los banqueros quieren que los gobiernos de Grecia, Portugal y España recorten aún más a la clase obrera como precio del rescate.

Mientras que los bancos en Europa y en EEUU siguen cosechando cientos de miles de millones en ganancias, el desempleo en Grecia está oficialmente alrededor del 10 por ciento. Igual en Portugal y alrededor del 20 por ciento en España. Esta es la cifra oficial de desempleo, lo que significa que, como en EEUU, la cifra está muy por debajo del desempleo real. Esta es una crisis para la clase obrera y los patronos quieren empeorarla.

Eso es lo que está impulsando la heroica y pertinaz resistencia de la clase trabajadora griega que ha salido a las calles para detener los ataques a sus pensiones, a su fecha de jubilación, a sus salarios y a su nivel de vida.

De hecho, el plan de rescate griego estaba destinado a detener el contagio de una quiebra financiera y una crisis económica. Pero también tenía por objetivo evitar el contagio de la lucha de clases, lo que fácilmente podría crecer entre las clases obreras militantes del sur de Europa.

La clase trabajadora griega luchó contra la ocupación nazi y la contrarrevolución respaldada por Bretaña después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Cuando las colonias africanas y asiáticas de Portugal estaban luchando y ganando su libertad, la clase obrera de Portugal estaba metida en un levantamiento revolucionario que llegó al borde de una revolución proletaria en 1974. Los/as trabajadores/as en España lucharon contra el régimen fascista de Franco y llevaron a cabo una heroica resistencia clandestina durante décadas.

Estos tres países constituyen las partes más pobres, más clasistas, y más militantes de Europa. Una lucha en el sur podría fácilmente extenderse hacia el norte, donde los/as trabajadores/as han estado bajo constante presión de las clases gobernantes de Alemania, Francia y Bretaña.

El capitalismo depende del estado para mantenerse vivo

Lo que muestra esta reciente crisis es la total dependencia de la clase capitalista en Europa, Estados Unidos y Japón, en el estado como soporte fundamental para mantener al sistema. Los estados capitalistas tienen que acuñar dinero para prestar a los bancos y a gobiernos debilitados solo para impedir temporalmente las crisis catastróficas que traen devastación a los/as trabajadores/as y los/as oprimidos/as.

Pero acudir a la máquina impresora no crea ningún valor. Solo los/as trabajadores/as crean valor. La Unión Europea, el Banco Central Europeo, el Sistema de Reserva Federal Estadounidense y el Ministerio de Hacienda pueden imprimir dinero para prestarle a los bancos y rescatarlos solamente por un tiempo. Pero la sobreproducción capitalista, el lento crecimiento y la estancación económica están estrangulando el sistema y creando un desempleo masivo a largo plazo. Además, el

sistema está siempre al borde del colapso, como muestra la reciente crisis en Europa.

Desenmascarando la “recuperación de empleos”

El gobierno y los medios de comunicación corporativos en Estados Unidos estaban glorificando las grandes cifras del “crecimiento de empleos” cuando surgió la crisis europea. Esa dosis de realidad provocó la sobriedad a todos los que estaban intoxicados con la “recuperación” del sistema.

Habían brindado por la supuesta creación de 290.000 empleos estadounidenses en el mes de abril. Una evaluación más seria de estas cifras trae poco consuelo a los/as trabajadores/as. De los 290.000 empleos, 62.000 eran empleos a corto plazo para el trabajo del censo poblacional. Según el gobierno, 150.000 trabajadores/as nuevos/as entran a la fuerza laboral cada mes. Así que de los 290.000 empleos nuevos creados, solo quedarían 80.000 para los/as desempleados/as.

Éste no pone ni una mella en el número de trabajadores/as que están desempleados/as, subempleados/as o que se han desanimados por no encontrar empleo y se han salido de la fuerza laboral. Esta cifra, llamada desempleo total o U6 por el Buró de Estadística Laboral, está en 30 millones. De hecho, la tasa ordinaria de desempleo subió del 9,7 por ciento a un 9,9 por ciento el mes pasado, y aún más importante, la cifra de desempleo total subió del 16,9 por ciento al 17,1 por ciento.

Puede que haya una recuperación en las ganancias y negocios capitalistas, pero no está resultando en emplear de nuevo a los/as millones de trabajadores/as que perdieron sus puestos. Además, la posibilidad de una recuperación masiva de la producción capitalista y de los empleos se ha eliminado de la agenda histórica.

En su lugar, el sistema va tambaleándose de crisis en crisis. La única salida para los/as trabajadores/as es seguir el camino de la clase trabajadora griega y no permitir que los patronos y los bancos pongan sus crisis en nuestras espaldas.

Los/as trabajadores/as deben rehusar ser esclavizados/as por el “mercado de empleos” capitalista donde cada día tienen que vender su mano de obra a algún patrón o sino enfrentar el rechazo y el desempleo. El empleo debe ser un derecho, un derecho político. Si los capitalistas no pueden dar empleos a los/as trabajadores/as, el gobierno debe garantizar un empleo o un ingreso a cada persona que lo necesite, un empleo con dignidad y un sueldo suficiente para vivir.

Si el capitalismo no lo puede hacer, entonces ya es hora de derrocar el sistema.

Goldstein es escritor del libro “Low Wage Capitalism”, un análisis marxista de la globalización y sus efectos en la clase trabajadora estadounidense. También ha escrito varios artículos y ha dado charlas sobre la crisis económica actual. Para más información, vea www.lowwagecapitalism.com